

# FACT SHEET



## Omaha Lead Refining Site Omaha, Nebraska

March 1999

### INTRODUCTION

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Region 7 will conduct soil sampling in the Omaha, Nebraska area beginning in March 1999. The EPA has been given information suggesting there may be lead contamination in residential yards in the Omaha metropolitan area. The EPA is conducting this sampling effort to determine if high levels of lead and other metals are present in the soil. This assessment will also help determine if there are any excessive human or environmental health risks.

### SAMPLING ACTIVITIES

Children younger than seven years old are more vulnerable to lead poisoning than adults, because their nervous systems are still developing. Children also tend to put their hands and other objects into their mouths, adding to their chances of swallowing soil contaminated with lead. Therefore, childcare centers were selected for the initial soil sampling.

A limited number of private residences will also be tested after the testing of childcare centers is completed. EPA will contact private property owners on a limited basis and offer them the opportunity to have their soil tested.

No soil testing will be done without the written permission of the property owner. All costs related to the testing will be paid by EPA.

The entire sampling process takes about

### HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAM

#### Reducing Child Exposure

At this time, EPA has not collected any data suggesting that residential property in the Omaha metropolitan area (including Council Bluffs, Iowa) is contaminated with lead from industrial sources. However, if you suspect that soil in your yard is contaminated, it is recommended that you follow these precautionary measures:

**! Wash children's hands after playing outside and before meals.**

**! Wash toys periodically and encourage children not to put toys in their mouths.**

**! Vacuum and dust inside the home often to remove dust that may have lead in it.**

**! Use only washed sand, wood chips or other known lead-free materials in outdoor play areas.**

one hour to complete. A total of about two cups of soil will be collected from various locations around each yard and tested for lead and other metals. The results for each property will be mailed to each property owner and any tenants after a quality control analysis has been performed. In addition, data from each property will be used to develop a map of the Omaha metropolitan area (including Council Bluffs, Iowa) showing locations where high lead concentrations have been found. This map will be used as a tool to identify any trends that may point to parties responsible for the contamination. It will also be used to inform the public about the progress of the investigation.

## **ADDITIONAL INFORMATION**

If you live in Douglas County and suspect that someone in your home has elevated lead levels in their body, EPA recommends that you call Reid Steinkraus with the Douglas County Health Department at (402) 444-7489. Free lead testing is available for any child between the ages of 6 months and 6 years old.

If you live in Council Bluffs and suspect that someone in your home has elevated lead levels in their body, EPA recommends that you call your family doctor and explain your concern. If you do not have a family doctor, please call Don Dierks with the Council Bluffs Department of Health at (712) 328-4666.

If you have questions about this fact sheet, or need additional information regarding this site, please contact:

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